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AUTHOR Keaster, Richard D.
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ABSTRACT

The Louisiana Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) program is a technical assistance network designed to help newly appointed administrators improve their instructional leadership skills. LEAD began in 1987 as a 3-year federal grant and was adopted by the Louisiana State Board of Education in 1989 as a certification requirement for all new principals and assistant principals. The first year of LEAD involves no inschool application of the process. Through role playing activities, principals learn how to apply new information to future situations. Teachers' perceptions of school climate are assessed and each principal is given a mentor. The second year of the program involves school-site application of a five-step process for problem solving. The first step is to initiate a structure designed to free teachers from apprehensions about participating in working out school problems. Next, the problem is defined through brainstorming. Then a detailed approach to charting alternatives and planning for a solution is taken. Lastly, objectives must be implemented to make the plan adjustable for unexpected problems. If a principal fails to successfully complete the internship, the state can forego the issuance of a permanent certificate. (10 references) (EJS)

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Leadership in Educational Administration Development: The Louisiana Administrative Internship

Dr. Richard D. Keaster

Southeastern Louisiana University

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Abstract

In 1987 the federal government helped fund a three-year grant in Louisiana which provided for the instruction of novice principals in group problem-solving. After two years of successful training of voluntary principals in four regions around the state, the LEAD program was adopted by the state department of education as its certification internship for all new principals and assistant principals.

Nine instructional centers at various universities throughout the state are currently engaged in the training of all newly appointed public school administrators. These individuals receive provisional administration certificates until the two-year program is successfully completed. Mentoring and participant-planned supplemental seminars provide additional leadership information and experiences for the administrators. Louisiana LEAD is a data-based leadership program designed to aid novice administrators in establishing a shared decision-making approach to solving school problems.

Leadership in Educational Administration Development: The Louisiana Administrative Internship

Design Overview

The Louisiana LEAD (Leadership in Educational Administration Development) Project is a technical assistance network designed to help newly appointed school building administrators improve their instructional leadership skills. Successful completion of the two-year program, which incorporates assessment, school problem-solving seminars, mentoring, participant-planned seminars, and evaluation, leads to permanent (renewable) state certification in administration.

A major portion of the training received by the administrators centers on a school problem-solving process called Consequence Analysis. In the first year monthly meetings are conducted by professors of educational administration at various centers of higher education throughout the state, and participants are trained in the LEAD process. In the second year the administrators continue the meetings, but also take what has been learned and apply it within their schools by forming LEAD committees and addressing a school problem.

The program as a whole was designed to facilitate the induction of newly appointed administrators into their positions by providing them with a "lock-step" plan for solving school problems. Additional benefits of

participation are realized through self- and school assessments, mentoring, and supplemental seminars.

Organizational Structure

Initially, LEAD was a three-year federal grant awarded to Louisiana State University in 1987 and subcontracted for implementation to four other major universities within the state: Northeastern Louisiana State University, Southeastern Louisiana University, University of Southwestern Louisiana, and University of New Orleans. The educational administration departments at these four institutions matched the moneys from the government with in-kind contributions to provide the necessary funding for carrying out the program. LSU functioned as the training institution for the regional directors (NLU, SLU, USL and UNO) and the data processing center for all assessment procedures.

The regional directors were responsible for contacting local superintendents and securing cohorts of 15 principals, each of whom had less than five years experience and would volunteer to participate. Learning the LEAD process and implementing it within their schools was accomplished within the first year, originally, with second year participation being optional. New cohorts were selected each year and the process was repeated.

In the third year of the grant (1989-90), however, some major organizational changes were made. The Louisiana Administrative Leadership Academy, under the control and

auspices of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, was searching for programs suitable for training the state's administrators. Every five years school administrators must earn 15 credits (one credit for every ten hours of "contact") by attending approved seminars and workshops or other academy-sponsored activities. LEAD apparently contained the qualities for which the Academy was looking.

State Adoption

In May of 1989, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to accept the superintendent of education's proposals to establish a principal internship for newly appointed building administrators and that LEAD be the training agent. The board not only accepted the recommendations but extended the proposal to involve certification requirements for all principals and assistant principals. During the past year (1989-90) all new administrators (appointed after July 1, 1989) were required to participate in LEAD training for Leadership Academy credit. Beginning July 1, 1990, the internship furnished by LEAD was required for state administrative certification. Permanent renewable certificates will be issued to all newly appointed administrators (principals and assistant principals) only following successful completion of the LEAD program, now modified to a required two-year exercise.

Under the new guidelines, the first year of LEAD participation involves no in-school application of the process. Administrators receive training in the LEAD

process and participate in simulated and role-playing activities learning how to apply the information received. Supplemental seminars, maintained from the earlier format, were deemed a valuable method for obtaining information important to these novice administrators. The seminars speakers, chosen by the participants, cover topics of school law, substance abuse, grant writing, parental involvement, marginal teachers, and other topics of interest pertinent to them.

Also in keeping with the original design, teachers' perceptions of the school climate will be assessed (Teacher Attitude Inventory) along with the administrators' perceptions of how teachers will respond. The TAI is a fourteen-dimension instrument measuring teacher attitudes toward various aspects of the school, its environment and the job performance of the administrator. This data is provided to the administrator for two purposes. First, as new administrators, it is important for participants to be informed with regard to how they and the school are perceived by their faculties. These perceptions are valuable in the day to day procedures conducted within the school that free the administrators from operating primarily on assumptions. Secondly, these data, collected at the end of the administrators' first year, provide a head start for focusing on a particular school problem for the in-school application (second year) portion of the LEAD process. Before the administrators, in cold, hard data, is a list of

"problems" within their schools, as perceived by their faculties.

The administrators' results from the Principal Performance Description Survey (completed by the administrator and collected early in the first year of the program) are used to help the participant plan a personal improvement program with the help of a veteran administrator or "mentor." These mentors (a component added this year under the new guidelines) are fellow administrators who meet specific qualifications. Accountability information in the form of the development plan (including log sheets of meeting times and topics discussed) and evaluation statements from the mentor is an integral part of the evaluation criteria for successful completion of the program.

The Lead Process

The instruction that LEAD participants receive from the various regional directors provide the cornerstone for the process as a whole. It could be said that the essence of the art of administration is problem-solving. The school administrator is the "linking agent" (Havelock & Havelock, 1973; Likert, 1967; Lipham, 1980) for a number of parties within and without the school environment (teachers, staff, students, parents, superintendent, school board members, businesses, the community, etc.). The school itself is a setting where a large number of individuals and activities must be coordinated and be responsive to one another. At the core of all these people and activities is the school

administrator, saddled with the responsibility of "making it all work out." Consequently, problems are commonplace and the smooth efficient operation of the organization depends on the ability of the one in control to solve these problems to the satisfaction of those concerned. Problem-solving is just one of the many skills deemed important for school administrators to possess. If mastered, however, administrators have in their arsenals a weapon for moving their organizations in a positive direction.

The literature is replete with data that suggest the quality and benefits of group decisions over individual efforts (Belasco & Allutto, 1972; Bridges, 1967; Duke, et. al., 1980; Likert, 1961; Maier, 1963; Vroom & Yetton; 1973). The current school-based management movement is based on the commitment to shared decision-making. At the foundation of the LEAD model is the conviction that school administrators can make better problem-solving decisions with greater commitment and satisfaction of parties involved when teachers are involved in the process.

The LEAD process involves a committee composed of faculty members and includes five steps for the thorough analysis and consequent solving of school problems:

1. Initiating Structure
2. Defining the Problem
3. Charting Alternatives
4. Planning for a Solution
5. Implementing Objectives

Initiating Structure

Licata, Ellis, and Wilson (1977) list three pre-conditions that must exist in order for teachers to want to participate in activities designed to foster educational change. First, teachers should perceive participation as being low in hindrance (extra paperwork, after-school meetings, etc.) Teachers' days are full enough without adding extra time or duties to their schedules. Any participation should not be viewed as "added work." A second consideration is that teachers should view their participation as relatively non-threatening in nature. In a "stimulus overload" environment (like schools) additional tension-producing structures will not be greeted with enthusiasm. The activity should not in any way contribute to the stress already experienced by teachers on a day to day basis. Finally, participation in the activity should be consistent with the demands of their role in the school organization. If the activity is perceived as an extension of their responsibilities as teachers, participation will be viewed more favorably.

From the very earliest meetings the administrators work to address these conditions by initiating a structure designed to free teachers from these apprehensions. With the help of the directors, the administrators "brainstorm"*

* (Brainstorming is a vital component of the LEAD process. Rules are discussed and observed during all brain-storming activities to ensure the free flow of ideas and allow for maximum input from all members of the group.)

ideas concerning ways to schedule released time during the regular school day to work on mutual school problems. In this effort the directors begin to model the behavior the training administrators will demonstrate with their faculties when they begin the in-school application during the second year. "Released time" and "mutual school problems" suggest the accommodation of the first and third concerns noted above. No after-school meetings addresses the problem of low hindrance and "mutual" school problems are certainly within the scope of the interest and responsibility of teachers within the school. The fact that the entire process (as will be evidenced with further explication) is very deliberate and thorough tends to reduce any stress associated with a serious responsibility. The attempt, at its core, is to reduce the stress being caused by the problem in the first place.

Once the committee has been formed, it, too, will brainstorm ideas for the purpose of focusing on a school problem to address. By considering input from other members of the faculty at various times throughout the process, this committee will be acting on behalf of the faculty to alleviate some problem that they feel needs attention. It is at this point that the second step in the process comes into play.

Defining the Problem

A proposed method for focusing on one school problem to address is to brainstorm with the group (entire faculty or

the LEAD committee) for problems in and around the school. Usually a wide variety of topics surface but there will likely be groupings or "clusters" of items that suggest more fundamental problems. The items in the clusters are termed "indicators" and they will lead the committee to a clearer problem definition. Once the indicators are appropriately "grouped" the committee can determine the area on which they desire to focus. Distinctions must be made among problem indicators, problem solutions (also sometimes offered as problems), and the real problem itself.

For purposes of framing the definition, a question, phrased positively, is suggested. For example, in area of student discipline a possible problem definition might be, "How can we reduce the number of student referrals to the office?" The trick is to phrase the problem definition so that there is an exact "fit" between the question and the indicators that suggest it. Care must be taken not to make the definition too global (possibly incorporating things other than the indicators) nor too narrow (excluding one or more indicators) simply by the way it is phrased.

Whereas this all may seem extraneous effort, it must be realized that defining the problem accurately is the most important aspect of solving it. Without appropriate attention to this step much time could be wasted addressing aspects unrelated to the problem or overlooking important aspects that should be addressed. Problem definition validity is secured by a "good fit" of indicators and accurate phrasing of the question. Additionally, confidence

in the selection is established as a result of these efforts. It is only at this point that the committee can begin to consider alternatives for solving the newly defined problem.

Charting Alternatives

As in the case with problem definition, a detailed, deliberate approach is recommended. The attempt, obviously, is to find the "best" solution after considering all the available options. Again, brainstorming with the group tends to generate an adequate list for analysis.

Once a group of alternatives (or possible solutions for solving the problem) has been generated, "charting" the alternatives provides a method for analyzing each proposal from a positive and a negative standpoint. Each alternative is placed (on a board or newsprint) for all to see and the "intended consequences" are noted. "What exactly do we want to accomplish with this suggestion?" By listing the benefits or advantages for each proposal, a comparison of these alternatives can begin to be made. (More use will be made of these benefits later).

Conversely, the list of alternatives should be individually examined for possible negative consequences. All organizations have a variety of structural components (sub-units, policies, procedures, roles) and social science aspects (psychological, economical, political, and social) which contribute to its make-up and effectiveness. Any time change or innovation takes place, chances are great that

some aspect of the organization will be negatively affected, at least temporarily. The LEAD model suggests that each of the alternatives be examined in the light of how, if adopted, it will negatively affect these various aspects. "Scanning" the organization, even briefly, can cover a "multitude of sins" later on and possibly prevent embarrassment due to lack of foresight.

When all alternatives are charted (complete with intended and negative consequences) one can be weighed against the others and a contingency ranking can be made. Should, for some reason, the first choice of the group not be workable (superintendent veto, a new forbidding negative consequence, etc.), a "Plan B" is in line, been analyzed, and is ready to go. This will allow the committee to continue movement in a positive direction without setbacks or delays.

Planning for a Solution

There are two major aspects for developing a plan to implement the chosen solution. First, the alternative should be stated as an objective. Behavioral objectives are no strangers in educational circles, so only a brief outline of this step will follow. Three specific components comprise objectives: a statement of conditions, the outcome, and the evaluation criteria. Two of these have essentially been completed.

It has already been noted that the problem has been defined and worded positively. The first step is to

transfer that statement into a statement of conditions. By taking the phrase, "Given a . . ." and inserting the problem definition, the first step is completed. In the earlier example on student discipline, the first portion of the objective would read, "Given a plan to reduce the number of student referrals to the office . . . ." By now adding the intended consequences (noted earlier) the objective is nearly complete. The only detail left is to determine the evaluation criteria or the strategy for measuring achievement of the objective. "How can we determine if we succeed?" With these three components in place, the second part of the plan can be addressed.

To have a detailed behavioral objective in place is good, but unless a plan is mapped out and carried out, it only looks good on paper. A detailed management plan facilitates implementation, the last step in the process.

After reviewing the objective and the anticipated negative consequences (noted earlier), the committee should prepare a list of activities designed to accomplish the objective **and** reduce or eliminate the negative consequences. For **each activity** the persons responsible for carrying it out, the starting and ending dates, and the completion criteria should be established and recorded. With this plan in order, the only thing left is to (forgive the allusion) "Just do it!"

Implementing Objectives

Once the management plan activities are under way, there is one more intermediate step to be taken before evaluation can be made. No matter how thorough the attempt to scan the organization (Step 3) in an effort to eliminate negative consequences, there will, undoubtedly, be some "unanticipated negative consequences" that will emerge. The admonishment is issued to make the plan adaptable so that adjusting for these unexpected problems will not require that the entire plan be scuttled. "Keep the baby, but change the water," as the saying goes. Flexibility is a virtue.

Evaluation, the last step in the procedure, is a two-fold process and both are the outgrowth of earlier considerations. First, the simple question is asked, "Has the objective been met?" Have the anticipated outcomes been achieved to the satisfaction of the measurement criteria? The second question to ask is, "To what extent have the anticipated negative consequences been reduced or eliminated?" If the objective has been accomplished but the negative consequences outweigh the benefit of the program, then real success has not been achieved. Both aspects deserve attention and satisfaction.

Significance of the Program

According to state statistics, the average or typical principal in Louisiana is a white male over 46 years of age. Over 80% of Louisiana's principals will be retiring within

the next ten years and 67% within the next five years. Much of what an administrator knows about working with groups of teachers and addressing mutual school problems is learned on the job. Few pre-service programs can provide the simulations appropriate to the acquiring of the skills for these tasks.

The State of Louisiana has attempted not only to provide its administrators with these skills early in their in-service years, but has tied the acquisition of such skills to the certification process. Successful completion of LEAD (as attested by the regional directors through observation, mentor data, and interviews) guarantees that Louisiana administrators can apply the skills needed for solving school problems and successfully employing the experience, knowledge, and skills of their faculties. Whereas these, in and of themselves, certainly do not encompass the variety of skills necessary for successful mastery of the job, they are, however, certainly fundamental to marginal success. If a principal fails to successfully complete the two-year LEAD internship program, the state can identify these weaknesses early enough to forego the issuance of a permanent certificate, and local districts can make employment adjustments accordingly.

Considering the fact that more and more pressure is being placed upon individual schools for accountability, it is incumbent upon the state and upon local school districts to provide for competent management and administration within their schools. By requiring all new administrators

to participate in the LEAD process within the first two years of their administrative assignments, a positive step has been made to equip principals and assistant principals with tools necessary for the effective administration of their schools. As a result, the impact of the expected turnover may be reduced.

The LEAD program in Louisiana has experienced success and broad-based support throughout the state. The adoption by the state as its administrative internship has legitimated the process and validated its substance. With the increase in the number of new appointments on the horizon, its growth, continued support within the state, and contribution to the effectual training of new administrators is assured.

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